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THE FIRST BUTTERCUP.

WRITTEN FOR THE NEW YORK CLIPPER.

BY ELSIE MAY.

I have it here, within my hand,
The first bright elf of Flora's band,
Whose petals to the sight unfold
The rich, warm hues of burnished gold.

A tiny waif of light it seems,
Strayed from the land of flowers and dreams;
Plucked by child hands from its bed
Where yet in ice bonds Keeps the rill.

They brought it here with smiling eyes,
And voice that throbbed with glad surprise,
Rejoiced to be the first to bring
The harbinger of early spring.

Flower, thou hast waked too soon to life,
For earth with chilly storm is rife,
And thou must fade in thy first hour,
Touched by the north wind's blighting power.

Yet thou reminded me full well
Of souls that in clay cerements dwell,
Whose hopes, when first they rush to bloom,
Drop, chilled and blighted, to the tomb.

Precocious hopes, and early dreams
Born while we think life, as it seems,
Springing too soon along our way,
Like thee, are doomed to swift decay.

Yet thou will die to rise again
As each year's summers deck the plain,
For with deep root and strength sublime
Thou canst defy the touch of time.

And thus, like thee, we should remain,
And bear earth's heritage of pain,
Unmurmuring, when hope's blossoms fall,
Remembering *this life is not all.*

Our flowers shall spring to richer bloom,
After life's winter and its tomb,
No more to wither or to die,
Perennial blossoms of the sky.

THE TEMPTED SISTERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NORA," "SHE WOULD BE AN ACTRESS," &c., &c.

CHAPTER X.—CONTINUED.

Towards her humble landlady Pauline felt strangely drawn. She, too, had an old father, but if he was doting he was harmless, and her lodger often envied her the little trouble she had with the old man. She remarked this to Fanchette one day as she stood in her room playing with little Therese.

"Ah, madame," was the answer. "My heart often aches when I look at my poor father. He was so good, so kind, so sensible, before the trouble came upon him which made him as you see."

"Then you have had your trials too, Fanchette, though you are so light hearted now!" said Pauline.

"Ah, yes, madame. It was trouble about my mother, and made my father what you know him."

"And you?" said her auditor, kindly.

"Ah, for me," was the reply. "I was very young, but it took my lover from me, and left me as you see, alone. But," she continued, "that was all for the best. I never could have married him, for my self-respect would have taken care of him, spotlessly, to where the [illegible] and made and spoiled [illegible]

[illegible] you [illegible]

"Do, was the reply. "I shall be glad of your company, but sit down," and drawing two chairs to the fire, which burned cheerfully in an English grate, which she had substituted for one of the stoves which have so comfortless an appearance she begged her companion to proceed.

"We are not of Flanders," began Fanchette, "but from Gascony. My father owned a farm; there he had married a Gascon woman, and it was our home for many happy years. There were two of us, my brother Pierre and myself, and as we grew up together people said we were the handsomest brother and sister for miles round. We were not alike. Oh, no! Pierre was dark, with flashing black eyes and jetty hair. You will think me very bold, madame, but there is something in the darling's face that reminds me of what my brother was when we were children together."

"Not a bit, Fanchette," replied Pauline. "My little Therese is flattered if your brother was what you describe him."

"Indeed he was," returned Fanchette, "at least outwardly, but alas! he was as deformed in mind as he was handsome in features. My father was an upright, honorable man, respected throughout all the country, where the name of Pierre Dupont was but another word for honesty and industry, and my mother, oh, madame, my mother was an angel."

"I never knew my mother," said Pauline; "there you were happier than I. But go on."

"It was strange," she resumed, "that the son of such parents should show such natural tendencies to vice. But so it was. My unhappy brother seemed to have overwhelming propensities to evil, which grew with his youth, and rendered him an object of fear and dislike to every one. Repeatedly he robbed our father of his savings to further his unhallowed pleasures, and at last he mixed himself up with a gang of desperadoes who infested the neighborhood, and was lost to us. My poor mother's health declined from the day he left us, and, though my father bore up bravely, he failed from day to day. One winter's night, about twelve years ago, we were sitting round the fire, and my brother's name was scarcely off our lips when the door was flung open and Pierre rushed in, pale and breathless, without hat or coat.

"'Save me—save me!' he cried. "The *gendarmes* are on my track; hide me, or I am lost!' It was too late. Already the tramp of horses' feet resounded from the road before the house, and before we could conceal him the cottage was full of men clamoring for their prisoner. They had come after him on three charges, coining, forgery, and—how shall I tell it?—murder!"

Pauline shuddered; she could sympathise with the speaker, and her hostess went on:—

"They dragged him away and my mother fell to the earth like one dead. She had received her death blow, for she loved her misguided boy, and from that hour she never spoke. The next day we learned the particulars. The gang my unhappy brother had joined had waylaid and robbed a wealthy man of the neighborhood, and, meeting with resistance, had murdered him. A knife bearing my brother's name was found near the corpse and led to their detection. Proofs of their other crimes were easily found, and they were all sentenced to various punishments."

"And your brother?" inquired Pauline.

"Was branded in the hand and sent to the galleys for life!" was the answer.

"And what of yourself?"

"Ah, madame, there is not much to tell about myself. I was preparing for my wedding with a young man of the neighborhood, when my brother's arrest and my mother's death, which quickly followed, interfered to prevent it, and it was put off. Ah, a put off wedding seldom comes to a happy termination. Henri belonged to a family somewhat above us in station, who had ever looked with coldness on his peasant bride. Now they had more reason than ever for this dislike of the match, and they partly persuaded, partly menaced him into breaking it off. Perhaps he saw for himself that it was better he should not mate with a felon's sister," Fanchette said, bitterly.

"Poor Fanchette!" said Pauline. "And you loved him?"

"Aye, as my life, madame! And it nearly cost me that, for I had a fever, and for many weeks I thought I should die, but Providence was merciful and spared me for my father. We left Gascony soon after and came here, and the cure of our parish, who has a brother in Antwerp, got my father the care of the church of St. Jacques, but he failed both in mind and body, and was obliged to give it up. I thought we should have starved, but I rose up. I had health and strength, and I worked at anything I could get, till, by degrees, I got enough fine ironing to support us, and do you know that they say now that Fanchette Dupont is the best *blanchisseuse* in all Antwerp."

She spoke with an honest pride that lit up her good humored features, and again Pauline saw the fleeting resemblance that had troubled her before.

"And have you never heard anything more of your brother?" she asked, taking little Theresa out of the arms of her kind nurse.

"Oh, yes," replied Fanchette, "but nothing definite. About ten years since my brother and another convict named Gustave de Ververais escaped from Tours, and there was a great hue and cry through the country, but we have never heard of their being taken. I will show you the bill that was posted up all over the country about them; and unlocking an old fashioned escritoire which stood in a corner of the room, she produced an old bill, yellow and tattered with age. It was headed

"Escaped from the galley of Tours."

And Pauline read with a curious interest the several descriptions of the convicts. Gustave de Ververais was described as short, slight, effeminate looking; but she paid little attention to that, and passed on to what followed. It ran thus:—

"Pierre Dupont, five feet seven inches in height; short, curly black hair, moustache and imperial; dark eyes; broad forehead; [illegible] manners and bearing of a gentleman; is [illegible] with the *fleur de lis* on the palm of the [illegible]

[illegible] expression of horror swept over Pauline as she read this; she did not speak, and the voice of her friendly roused her from the reverie she was fast falling into.

"Ah, that is a good description of poor Pierre. He was very handsome," she said, with a sigh. "I have his portrait, too, for it was sent to every police office in the country and a [illegible] was given to me, but I fear I threw it away," she said, hotly, as she deathly pale[illegible] her hostess's face.

"Indeed," was the answer. "I am much interested in the story."

"I dare not let my father see it," Fanchette said, "for he loved his son, and I sometimes think now he forgets his misfortune—at any rate, he is happier;" and she turned once more to the escritoire, and from a [illegible] drawer, which she touched with a spring, she took out a thin packet.

Pauline watched her, as with a loving, almost a reverent hand, she undid the little parcel. There is surely a secret well of love deep down in woman's heart, let the object of it be ever so degraded; however the better judgment may rebel against any association with crime, the love is still there; and so it was with Fanchette.

Forger, felon, murderer though he was, he was her brother still; and tears fell upon her fingers as she loosed the string.

"Ah, madame! they had cut his beautiful hair before this was taken," she said; and she placed a finely executed photograph of a man in a prison dress before Pauline, who gazed at it for a moment, and, uttering a loud shriek, started from her seat, to fall back again in violent hysterics.

It was come to light at last—the terrible secret which for so many years she had vainly endeavored to discover. She knew the meaning of the covered hand now—the face of Hubert Lannay gazed at her from the picture with a defiant mockery—the felon brother of the Gascon peasant girl was her husband, and the lovely infant who crowed in her arms and smiled in its unhappy mother's face would ere long lisp his name and call him father.

The terrified Fanchette hastened to her assistance, and she soon recovered her self possession. She determined not to reveal the whole of her dreadful secret, at any rate for the present; but she told her hostess that she had seen her brother at no distant period, and so accounted for her sudden fright. The delight of Fanchette at the news blinded her to the excessive emotion of Pauline, and the latter retired to her own apartment to think, in a fever of agitation, over what course to pursue.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REMOVAL—THE WEDDING—THE BANKER'S DAUGHTER—THE STEWARDSHIP—THE PAINTING.

Gilbert Bertram, after his passionate and hasty rejection of the hand of Blanche, returned home in no very enviable state of mind. He certainly felt that he had reasonable grounds for acting as he had done, but his heart was ill at ease. He had loved her [illegible] and deep; and he could not in a moment [illegible] His mother [illegible] had passed, though [illegible] daughter that she could not believe that any good thing could be connected with them.

She saw her son's daily increasing dejection with alarm; his pursuits were one by one abandoned; his name became a rarity in the literary world, and he was fast sinking into the aimless, idle life which tends more than any other to keep open the wounds given to the heart by blows such as he had received. Mrs. Bertram proposed their leaving London. In listless apathy he consented. She asked him where he would like to go.

"He did not care. All places were alike to him," he said.

His mother rejoiced at this, for she had a plan in her head, and this docility went a long way in its furtherance. Gilbert's native place was a little town on the borders of Scotland, and before he became known as an author he had often visited it, for Scorwick and its rugged beauty were very dear to him, until his mother's failing health rendered warmer air necessary, and they went into Cornwall, where he met Blanche de Cressey, when, of course, he immediately considered Stonehurst, with its blue sea and fairy-like scenery, the most lovely place in the known world.

Now, however, when his mother proposed his retiring with her to Scorwick for a time, she met with no opposition. He would have gone anywhere so that there was no chance of meeting Blanche.

Already he was feeling the full force of her uncle's words:—"For every bitter pang you have made her suffer your own heart shall be rung tenfold;" and he felt that death would be preferable to the utter desolation of mind and prostration of body he was then enduring. Mrs. Bertram had a motive in her selection of a residence.

She had made a match for her son in her own mind years ago, and the object of her choice lived in his native place. Marian Morton was the orphan daughter of a clergyman in the neighborhood, who was distantly related to the Bertrams. Marian lost both her parents when she was but very young, and Mrs. Bertram had taken charge of her till she was able to earn her own living, which she commenced doing at the early age of seventeen, as a governess.

She was a gentle, affectionate girl, and warmly loved her benefactress, who exerted herself to procure a comfortable situation, and was rewarded by seeing her installed in the house of the lady of the manse, with whom she had remained ever since. Mrs. Bertram had, in her own mind, fixed upon Marian as her son's wife, and it was very evident to her motherly eyes that the young girl loved Gilbert dearly. She ventured once to hint to him how much she should like her foster child for a daughter in reality.

"Nonsense, mother," he said. "Marian is my little sister; she would not have me if I asked her; and, besides, she is not the wife for me."

"Ah, my boy, I am afraid you will be looking too high," his mother said. "She would make you a good wife."

"Yes, mother, I know all that. According to your creed she would be the best of wives. That is to say, I should always have a dutiful, obedient wife; should never know when washing-day came round, or ever see a shirt without a button, or a dirty fire-side. All very nice, mother mine, but I want more than that."

His mother, good matter-of-fact soul, wondered what on earth [illegible] could want more, and there the matter [illegible] however, there was an opportuni[illegible] for her to resume her favorite theme, and she accordingly did so a very short time after they were settled at Scorwick.

Miss Morton had been spending the evening with them, and Mrs. Bertram took occasion to advert to her improvement, both mental and bodily, since they had last seen her, and again hinted to her son that she thought Marian loved him.

"Oh, mother! let me hear no more about it," he said at length. "I have no heart for any one. I could not make any woman happy with the remembrance of another constantly between us. Were she dead," he was going to add, "it would be a different case," but his mother suddenly interrupted him.

"Look upon her as dead! For she is dead to you. False! Wicked!——"

"Stop, mother," her son interposed. "Say not another word. We will speak of this again." And hastily bidding her good-night, he retired to his room.

Long and bitterly he reflected upon his mother's words.

"Does Marian love me?" he asked himself. "I want nothing now but duty in a wife, and if——" He paused, for the image of Blanche in all her loveliness rose to his mind, and the very thought of another seemed a sin; but with the remembrance of her came the thought of her falsehood and all she had made him suffer, and his heart hardened.

"I will marry Marian," he said to himself. "I will have a quiet home if I cannot have happiness. I shall please my mother; and as for her—well, heaven helping me, I will be a good and a true husband to her."

No sooner was his mind made up than he was all anxiety to put his design into execution, or to find himself in some way for its fulfillment, as if he feared his resolution might give way. He did not go to bed, but paced his room till morning.

His mother remarked it, and he said shortly:—

"I was thinking of what you said to me. I will marry Miss Morton."

Mrs. Bertram would have expressed her pleasure at the announcement in a flood of small talk, but her son stopped her with:—

"If you have any love for me, mother, you will not speak of it again."

She never did speak of it, but she wondered and rejoiced at his sudden determination. He lost no time in addressing Marian, whose happiness in the fulfillment of her secret wishes, which she had long considered hopeless, blinded her to the fact that no heart went with the hand so suddenly offered.

She came to her future [illegible] all smiles and joyful tears; [illegible] kind—and his mother so [illegible] thought no woman ever had so [illegible] little thought that another's image stood between her and her betrothed husband, and knew nothing of the bitter agony that wrung his heart as he sat listening to her loving words.

She was not the wife for him, and he knew it, but she had given him her whole heart, and he would not trifle with it. Gilbert Bertram was an honorable man, and not for worlds would he have his future wife know what a fragment of a heart he brought her. The wedding was fixed for a very early day, for Marian had no need for delay. She had but to give notice to her kind mistress, and come to her new home, for they were to reside with Mrs. Bertram, who remained at the request of both; the young bride begging it because she was deeply attached to her, and her son from a feeling of dread at his future life, which he felt his mother's presence would render more endurable.

The wedding day came at last, after a month of busy preparation to the widow, of joyful anticipation to the happy bride elect, and of maddening recollections to Gilbert, who contrived during the greater part of the time to absent himself on the plea of business. The sun was shining cheerily on a bright morning in the early spring, when the simple bridal party passed down the quiet street of Scorwick.

It was a primitive little town, and people went to their weddings there. A carriage and pair would have thrown the good people into a fever of excitement, and caused a sensation it would have taken a week to subdue. A friend of Mrs. Bertram's was to give the bride away, and they had no other company.

She was very simply dressed; a rich, dove-colored silk, with a white bonnet and delicate lace shawl—all the gifts of the lady with whom she had lived so long—became her well; and with the flush of happy excitement giving color to her usually pale face, and lighting up her soft brown eyes, Marian looked really handsome, and many people thought, as they saw them together, that they had seldom seen a better mated couple, as far as looks went.

They were soon at the little church, followed by a great many of their neighbors, who, like all country folk, invariably attended weddings, christenings and funerals, from sheer lack of excitement from the world without. They reach the altar, and the service commences.

"And, forsaking all other, cleave thou only unto her as long as ye both shall live."

How these solemn words in our beautiful marriage service ring in Gilbert's ears, and rouse [illegible] as if in a dream. Forsaking all other! How hollow they sound; and even now, there, before the altar, [illegible] a vision of a fair head, with its coronal of golden [illegible] and blue eyes, looking lovingly into his. How often had he pictured to himself his wedding-day, and, in fancy, adorned that fair head with a bridal wreath.

"Too late! too late!" he murmured to himself, and for one wild moment he felt as if he must rush from the church, and hide himself anywhere; go he cared not whither, to escape this hated marriage.

One glance at the trembling girl beside him restored him to himself.

"Heaven help me!" he murmured; and he vowed inwardly to be to her all a husband should.

A few moments more and the service is over, and he turns from the altar a married man; and Marian, all smiles and blushes, is receiving the congratulations of those about her, as Mrs. Bertram. They adjourn to the vestry to sign their names, while the bells in the old-fashioned tower strike up a merry peal, each tone of which falls like molten lead on Gilbert's heart. Marian remembered afterwards that the lips which touched hers were as cold as ice!

CHATER XII.

THE RECOGNITION—THE CONSPIRACY—THE STORY.

Time rolled on and the stirring world of London wondered what had become of the gifted author whose hand had wielded the pen so skilfully—who day by day had touched the heart with some truthful picture or pleased the fancy with some witty sketch. They would scarce have known their idol could they see Gilbert Bertram now. The pale, grave man, in that tiny cottage, in yonder little town, is surely not the lively, witty, clever writer, who so electrified the fashionable world.

'Tis even so; all thought or ambition seems to have died within him, perished with his crushed hopes. Rumor, with its hundred tongues, is busy in Scorwick about the family, who receive no company, and seldom go out. Marian feels there is something wanting in her husband. He is very kind and gentle, but her home is not what she pictured it in her young dreams, and her cheek grows pale and her step heavy, and busy tongues begin to talk, and officious friends begin to whisper that:—

"Surely, young Mr. Bertram is not kind to his wife."

That was not true, however; he was very kind. He faithfully kept the vow he had made, "to be to her all a husband should be," but there lacked something. Marian could feel what, though she could not express it, and she shed many bitter tears over her disappointment. The first year of their married life passed slowly away, and the returning spring brought with it a lovely babe to cheer her drooping spirits.

With what joy and pride she looked upon her boy, who had his father's features, and she rejoiced to see that Gilbert seemed to turn with great affection to the child, who early learned to know his voice and smile in his face. When the little Henry was nearly a year old a great misfortune fell upon his parents. His [illegible]'s savings, together with a small annuity of his mother's, were all swept away by the breaking of a bank—one of those monstrous swindles which, from time to time, astonish the world and enrich two or three scoundrels by the ruin of hundreds of honest folk.

It happened at a sad time for the Bertrams, for Gilbert's long-failing health had, at last, given way, and he was prostrated by a low fever, which the shock of the news aggravated to such an extent that for many days Marian and her mother watched by what they thought his dying bed. He recovered slowly to find himself a ruined man, and though a kind letter from a publishing firm with whom he had been connected awaited him, expressing sorrow for his misfortune, and offering half the money down for a serial novel, to be completed at an easy rate of work, he found his overwrought mind quite unequal to the task.

Many times he took up his pen to write in vain; the thoughts would not come, and he seriously retarded his recovery by his grief and anxiety at the thought of those who were dependent on him for support.

It was at this time that he felt the full value of his devoted wife. All that woman could do she did to lessen his trials. She cheered, encouraged and helped him on, till at length the book was commenced, and his name was once more before the world. From that time he roused himself and became again, by degrees, strong and energetic.

He found, however, that they were in very straitened circumstances, and hearing of a gentleman in the south of England who was in want of a steward, he applied for the office, and through the influence of some of his former friends he obtained it. There was a time when his pride would have revolted against taking such a situation. He cared no more for mixing with the gay world, and he had a wife and child to support.

Their preparations for leaving Scorwick were soon made, and the new year following the birth of their child saw them settled in their new home. It was a pretty spot. Their cottage, with its cheerful garden, overlooked the whole of Plymouth Bay, than which no lovelier sea view can be found in England.

Little did he think that the splendid mansion whose gleaming turrets caught the earliest rays of the sun, which lit up his little study so cheerily, held her who had been at once the hope and the blight of his existence; for whose dear sake he would once have laid down his life, and who, when he thought himself most blessed, had turned and stung him to madness! Little did Blanche think, in her almost princely home, that from the very windows of her boudoir she could overlook the home of him she loved and mourned with all a woman's passionate devotion. It was better for all parties that they did not know it.

The name of Hilton was not uncommon in that part of the country, and Gilbert had never heard of the purchase of Reardon. The only person who suspected the real state of the case was Marian, and, with a woman's instinct, she at once divined that the beautiful heiress she had often heard of but never met was the same Blanche de Cressey whose treachery had made her husband the wreck of his former self. She had heard the story, but she never told him she knew it, and now that she had made this fresh discovery, like a wise woman she held her tongue. She was a generous, warm hearted creature, and she loved her husband devotedly, and in their quiet home they were very happy.

The soft air of the south, however, did not agree with Marian; she drooped and faded daily, and Gilbert was contriving in his own mind the means of procuring for her change of air, when a succession of circumstances prevented it. The property of which he had charge belonged to a gentleman who seldom visited it, as he preferred residing on the continent, and the new steward found his office no sinecure.

Poachers and gipsies infested the grounds, and as one part of the estate abutted on the sea there was a good opportunity for smugglers, or those who bore that character, to carry on their nefarious practice unchecked. News was daily brought to the cottage of depredations committed in some portion or other of the domains, and as Gilbert had strict injunctions about the preservation of game, he had to keep up a strong force of keepers.

Shots were frequently heard at the house, and on one occasion, when they had been there scarce a month, a man was seriously wounded close by, and brought in, and the fright and agitation had such an effect on Marian as to render her seriously ill, and she was obliged to keep her bed. The doctor who was called did not disguise from her husband that the case was serious; he told him that there was a strong tendency to consumption, and that unless she were removed where she could have perfect quiet of mind and body, it would become too deeply rooted to admit of remedy. Gilbert heard the news with dismay. Just as he was beginning to feel a tranquility he never hoped for, a new trouble seemed to be hovering over him. Was he never to know happiness again? Was his wife to be snatched from him just as he was learning her worth? It seemed so, and he resolved to remove her without delay, even if it cost him his situation.

He told her of his plan that evening, as they sat by her bed-room fire, and they indulged in many happy anticipations of the future. Marian had so many plans of what she should do "when she was well again," and Gilbert, though he looked at her with a pang at his heart, joined cheerily in her lively expectations.

They talked on till, fearful of wearying her too much, he was leaving her to retire to rest, when a hurried knock came to the door, and William, the head keeper, presented himself, with the intelligence that smugglers were known to be on shore, and that suspicious looking characters had been seen about the park.

"Two have just passed me," the man said.

"I will go and look at them," replied Gilbert.

"They look harmless enough," William said, "but I am sure they are here for no good."

Gilbert desired the man to wait a minute, and, running up stairs, told his wife and mother not to sit up for him. Marian and Mrs. Bertram joined in entreaties that he would remain at home, but to no purpose.

"Duty called him," he said, "and there would be no danger."

He gaily told his wife not to spoil her beauty by waiting for him, and his laugh was the last sound she heard as the door closed after him. Little did the loving wife think that the farewell so lightly spoken would be for ever; that never more in this world would she look upon the face she loved with such deep affection, that the light step would return to her no more, or the loving smile greet her till the last eternal meeting.

* * * * * *

Gilbert and the keeper turned away from the little garden of the cottage and walked slowly into the park. The moonlight was shining full upon the many windows of Reardon, and he pointed it out to William.

"A fine specimen of a thoroughly English country seat," said he.

"Ay," was the reply. "The poor gentleman did not live long to enjoy it, though. He has only been there three years, and now he is dead. It seems a pity for a man to spend such a heap o' money for so short a time."

"Who is the heir?" asked Gilbert.

"Oh, there's no heir. It all goes to a young lady, his niece—such a beauty. She will be a match for any lord in the land, though they do say she will have nought to say to any of them. Mr. Hilton was a careful man, and he had a power o' money by all accounts."

Mr. Hilton!—a young lady! A light was beginning to break in upon his mind. Could it be the Mr. Hilton associated in his memory with so many sweet and bitter recollections? Could the youthful owner of this splendid house be his lost Blanche? He dreaded to ask the question, but he felt he must know.

"What is the young lady's name?" he asked.

"Is it possible you have not heard of Miss de Cressey, sir?" the man said in surprise.

Miss de Cressey! the name struck his heart like a sharp arrow, but he mastered the rising sensations, which almost choked him, and replied:—

"You know, William, I have gone out so little since we came here that I have scarce heard the name of any of my neighbors; but what is there to hear of this redoubtable young lady?" he continued, with a miserable effort at gaiety and unconcern.

"There's nothing to hear of her but what's good," returned William. "There's not a poor body for miles round but has some reason to bless her name; not a sad heart but feels the lighter when it crosses her path. Ah, she's a real angel, is Miss Blanche, and she has a sweet face of her own, though you rarely see a smile upon it, for they do say," he said, lowering his voice mysteriously, "that she has had a disappointment—crossed in love, you know."

The overwhelming rush of agonizing remembrance almost overpowered Gilbert, but he muttered "Indeed!"

"Yes," replied the man, who was so intent upon his story as not to notice the emotion of his companion. "They say she was going to be married to a gentleman, and he got tired of her, and trumped up some [illegible] got [illegible] and called him [illegible] of people. That's what [illegible] say I. Lor, sir, if it's true, wouldn't I like to have the handling of such a fellow—that's all. Just let me have him for ten minutes; his mother should not know him at the end of 'em;' and William clenched his fists and struck out in indignation that would have been comic to an uninterested hearer, never noticing the ashy paleness that spread over Gilbert's cheeks and lips.

Was it to be always thus? Was he even to hear the vindication of Blanche de Cressey from strangers' lips, and to feel that he alone of all the world was her accuser? He hastily sought to turn the conversation, and inquired when Mr. Hilton died and of what.

"Last Wednesday was a week," the man answered. "He died very sudden like; I did not rightly hear of what."

"And the young lady?"

"Is the heiress," was the reply. "They do say she is worth millions."

"Not quite so much as that I suspect," Gilbert said with a smile. "But if the property is any way in proportion to the mansion she must be very rich."

"As fine an estate as any in England, sir," said William, "and in capital order. Mr. Hilton was his own steward, and I don't suppose there is a tenant behind-hand, or a farm that does not pay on the whole place."

Gilbert gave another look towards Reardon, which now faced them in all its beauty, and the thought crossed his mind that the servants in that lordly mansion might even then have been hailing him their master; and for a moment grief and regret for his lost position took possession of his heart. It was but a moment, and it was pardonable, for he was an educated, high souled man, and intercourse with his fellow men had been very sweet to him.

Now, however, things were changed, and with his regret came the remembrance of his sweet wife and all her goodness; and with a last look at that massive front, lit into a thousand sparkles by the brilliant moon, he turned to go, inwardly resolving that on the morrow he would bear Marian far away, and never look upon Reardon again.

"There does not seem much mischief brewing tonight," he said, as they retraced their steps into the dark wood which skirted the park of Semptehurst, of which he was steward.

"I fancy there is though," replied William. "There is a gipsy camp on the Reardon property, about two miles from here, and I have seen a good many of them about this evening, and the two fellows I told you of ——"

He stopped suddenly; a slight rustling in the bushes had attracted his attention, and he laid his hand upon his companion's arm.

"Oh, a hare!" said Gilbert.

"Hush!" said William, "that's no hare; the noise was too high from the ground," and, gently drawing him away, they retreated behind a hedge, which enclosed a small hut used by the park keepers for their tools and sometimes as a watch-house. There they crouched down and listened. William was right; it was no hare which was parting the bushes at no great distance, and advancing with stealthy steps towards their place of concealment.

The footsteps came nearer and the head of two men could be distinctly heard; and, peering through a hole in the [illegible], Gilbert distinctly saw them as they emerged from the shadow of the underwood. Another moment and they stood full in the moonlight, close to where William and his companion were hiding.

Their faces were shaded by large slouched hats, and they wore the garb of foreign sailors, and were rapidly conversing in whispers in what Gilbert's quick ear detected to be French. There was an indefinable something in the gait and manner of the taller of the two that struck him strangely. Could any of his old acquaintances be masquerading here; and if so, for what?

He thought over all he could remember, but to none belonged that peculiar, light, springy [illegible], and that a fire, in the shadow of the underwood. [illegible] his companion's arm.

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He thought over all he could remember, but to none belonged that peculiar, light, springy [illegible], and that a fire, in the lower part of the vessel several natives [illegible] in their berths, and the body of a boy was crushed [illegible] bottom of the gangway stairs. Neither provisions nor [illegible] could we discover anywhere. We should [illegible] the ship more minutely, but for the [illegible] decks of our seamen; we therefore carried [illegible] book already mentioned, and, returning to our own [illegible] immediately steered to the southward, deeply [illegible] by the awful example which we had just witnessed of the danger of navigating the polar seas in [illegible] stores.

With these reflections crossing our minds, we were [illegible] cruising about, when, within a few days after leaving the ill-fated ship, we found ourselves [illegible] within the neighborhood of a [illegible] were three other vessels similarly situated, and were the representatives of [illegible] England and Portugal. The officers of our ship [illegible] making preparations to visit their [illegible] The men were amusing themselves [illegible] about the decks, when the look-out on the mast-head [illegible] intelligence of a whale by the [illegible]

"There she blows! There she blows!" [illegible] beauty!" There she blows!" [illegible] officer on deck. "Keep off south, [illegible] lay, and what is she?" "Three boats, sir," [illegible] the reply. The men [illegible] this dialogue. As soon [illegible] heard each man [illegible] Stepping for a moment [illegible] the stern sheets, we [illegible] off, as we thought, [illegible] scene of action from [illegible] and particularities [illegible] contending crews [illegible] sible to imagine. [illegible] in chase. These [illegible] found they had the advantage [illegible] the start of us. [illegible] to the most [illegible] velocity hardly credible [illegible] only man who never [illegible] chase of the whale.

STOREY'S LAMENT.

WRITTEN FOR THE NEW YORK CLIPPER.

I'm the victim of Lydia, all tatter'd and torn,
All her fair hair'd companions have struck me and gone;
A friend of fair Thompson, in a carriage was nigh,
To cowhide a poor fellow whilst Markham stood by.

I'll not meet the fierce blondes in Chicago again
Till I tell how they've whipped me and cruel they've been;
And freely I'll scatter their fame o'er the land,
And show up the fighting of this burlesquing band.

ANNIE H.

"THE HEART UNDER THE PEA JACKET."

WRITTEN FOR THE NEW YORK CLIPPER.

"There she blows," sung out the man at the fore; "not half a mile off." "Down helm!" shouted our captain. "Brace up the mizen topsail!" "Hoist and swing the boats! Lower away!" Down went the boats, and down followed the crews. As the boats struck the water every man was on his thwart, with his hand on the loom of his oar, and all at once the three boats were cutting their way through the water in the direction of the whale. At this time I was steering the mate's boat, and she happened to be the fastest puller, so that, although we all left the ship together, and for a few rods kept head and head with each other, still we knew well enough that, as soon as the word came from the mate to "give way," we should drop the others in a moment. So we took things "a kind of easy" until "wanted;" in a few minutes the whale showed himself again on the surface of the water. "Here she is!" cried the mate. "Lay back hard! Spring hard, I tell you! There she blows! Only give way, my boys, and she is ours!" Our boat bounded forward like a thing of life. We were going on her starboard quarter; just the chance I like to fasten on a whale. I had not been on my feet a minute before I had two harpoons to the hitches into her. "Stern all!" sung out the mate, as soon as he saw the irons in the whale. In less time than it takes to tell it the whale started off like lightning. "Hold on line!" was the next order; and away we shot after her like an arrow from the bow. The mate by this time had his lance ready. "Haul me onto that whale!" he shouted; and all hands turned to hauling line. We had got nearly up to the whale when she took to sounding, taking the line right up and down from the head of the boat. I had got two turns of the line round the loggerhead, and was holding on as much as the boat would bear, when suddenly another large whale shot up out of the water nearly her whole length, in a standing position, hanging directly over the boat. I threw off the lines from the loggerheads, and shouted to the men to "stern." But it was of no use; she fell the whole length of her body on the boat. I heard a crash. In a moment we were under water. Upon rising to the surface I saw the whale we were fast to about a rod off, thrashing the water into a foam with his flukes, the ocean red with blood, and the crimson streams pouring from the wounds in the whale's sides made by the harpoons. In another direction I could see pieces of the boat floating round. At the distance of two or three miles I could occasionally get a glimpse of the ship as I rode on the top of a swell. Not losing heart or hope, I struck out for a piece of the boat, which was floating not far from me. The crew came up one after the other, catching at anything they could see to help to keep them afloat. One poor fellow came paddling along with two oars under his arms, crying out that his back was broken. Another of the crew had got his thigh broken, and was clinging to a piece of the wreck. The second mate, who was in another boat, soon came to our assistance and picked us up, and so much had every one been engaged in looking out for himself that we did not perceive that one of our number was missing. But, alas! it was too soon found out. He was a young man about seventeen years of age, and had been [illegible] went in the place of another man who [illegible] time. The whale fell directly overhim and probably killed him in a moment.

[illegible] Even after we had [illegible] mates, now [illegible] for this! "An old [illegible] of whom we knew [illegible] poor sailors as little better than brutes, and who knew little or nothing of the kind feelings and affections that are hid under their rough outside, [illegible] have seen and saw on board that ship. Even [illegible] hearts would melt; and they would find it is not always the polished and educated, the smooth-faced and handsome man, that has the warmest heart or the most generous feelings." Often and often have I proved this on board the various ships I was destined to belong to. Under many a rough pea-jacket bosom there beats a heart which [illegible] may feel long for, and be slow in finding under the patches and silks, and satins of fashion and frivolity.

We were continuing our cruise, when, one morning, we found ourselves becalmed among an immense number of icebergs, in about 77 deg. north latitude. On one side, and within a mile of our vessel, these were of immense height, and closely wedged together, and a succession of snow-covered peaks appeared behind each other as far as the eye could reach, showing that the ocean was completely blocked up in that quarter. And this would probably been so for a long period of time. Our captain did not feel altogether satisfied with his situation, for there being no wind, he could not move one way or the other, and he, therefore, kept a strict watch, knowing that he would be safe as long as the icebergs continued in their respective places. About midnight the wind [illegible] to a gale, accompanied by thick showers of snow, which [illegible] cession of thundering, grinding and crashing [illegible] fearful evidence that the ice was in motion. [illegible] every moment received violent shocks, for [illegible] ness of the atmosphere prevented all on board [illegible] discovering in what direction the open water [illegible] if there actually was any at all on either side. We spent the whole of the night in [illegible] often as any case of danger happened to present [illegible] and towards morning the storm abated, to our great joy we found the vessel had not sustained any serious injury. We remarked with some surprise that the accumulated icebergs, which had the preceding evening formed an impenetrable barrier, had been separated and disengaged by the wind, and that in one place a canal of open sea wound its course among them as far as the eye could discern. It was two miles beyond the entrance of this canal that a ship made its appearance about noon. The sun shone brightly at the time and a gentle breeze blew from the north. At first some intervening [illegible] prevented us from distinctly seeing anything but her masts, but some surprise was shown by most of us at the straggling manner in which her sails were disposed, and with the dismantled aspect of her yards and rigging. She continued to go before the wind for a few furlongs, and then grounding upon the low icebergs, remained motionless. Our captain's curiosity was so much excited that he immediately jumped into his boat, when we soon had her alongside. Upon approaching her we found her hull was miserably weather-beaten, and not a soul appeared on deck, which was covered with snow to a considerable depth. We hailed her crew several times, but no answer was returned. Previously to stepping on board, as one port-hole near the main chains caught our eye, and looking into it, we perceived a man reclining in an arm chair, with writing materials on a table before him. The feebleness of the light made everything very indistinct. We went upon deck, and, having removed the hatches which we found closed, we descended to the cabin. We first came to the apartment which we had seen through the port-hole. A tremor settled upon us as we entered it. Its inmate retained its former position, and seemed to be insensible to strangers. We found him a corpse, and a greenish, damp mould had covered his face and forehead, and veiled his eyeballs. He had a pen in his hand and a log-book lay before him, the last entry in whose unfinished page ran thus:—"November 30th, 18—, we have now been encloised in the ice seventeen days. Our fire went out yesterday, and our master has been dead ever since to kindle it, without success. His wife died this morning. There is no relief." We left the spot without uttering a word. On entering the principal cabin, the object that attracted our attention was the dead body of a female, reclining on a bed in an attitude of deep repose and attention. Her countenance retained the freshness of life and the contraction of the limbs alone showed that the form was inanimate. Seated on the floor was the corpse of an apparently young man, holding pen in hand, and three very small pieces of wood, as if engaged in making a fire. In the fore part of the vessel several natives [illegible] in their berths, and the body of a boy was crushed at the bottom of the gangway stairs. Neither provisions nor [illegible] could we discover anywhere. We should [illegible] the ship more minutely, but for the [illegible] decks of our seamen; we therefore carried [illegible] book already mentioned, and, returning to our own [illegible] immediately steered to the southward, deeply [illegible] by the awful example which we had just witnessed of the danger of navigating the polar seas in [illegible] stores.

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THE METROPOLITAN.—The popular Jeppe and Fannie Delano contributed their excellent and clever sketches.—COURIER-JOURNAL, LOUISVILLE, KY., Dec. 5.

Mr. and Mrs. Delano have for four weeks past been decidedly popular performers at this place. Their repertory of musical acts presents some of the most charming sketches, which, with the accomplished playing of Mrs. Delano on the sweet-toned Swiss bells, have won the highest approval. Encore follows encore when she appears. This evening will be the last of their engagement, and they go hence to St. Louis. They leave behind them a host of friends, whose regrets are only lessened by the sincere wish that they will return soon for a longer stay among the many who appreciate their pleasing social qualities, and praise their genuine art as musicians.—CINCINNATI DAILY TIMES.

THE ADELPHI.—The new stars, Jeppe and Fannie Delano, with their admirable sketches and changes, made themselves enduring favorites with the audience.—BUFFALO COURIER, Jan. 23, 1877.

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The Delanos—Jeppe and Fannie—met with a fine reception in their clever musical act at the Central last week. They are excellent artists, and their business is new and taking.—THE ITEM, PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 11, 1877.

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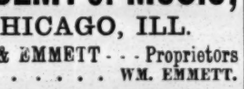

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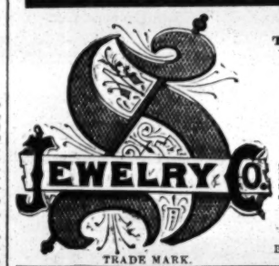

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